

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001542

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EB/CBED AND EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2014

TAGS: [EPET](#) [EWWT](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA REQUESTS USG REACTION TO IDEA OF  
VOLUNTARY PRINCIPALS ON OIL TANKER TRANSIT THROUGH STRAITS

REF: ANKARA 1061

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons: 1.4 (b and d).

[11.](#) (U) This is an action request -- see para 8.

[12.](#) (C) Summary: MFA Director General for Energy Hakki Akil asked March 12 for an initial USG reaction to the Ministry's initiative (reftel) to obtain agreement on voluntary principles committing oil companies to reduce the flow of oil through the Turkish straits. Akil provided a copy of a draft voluntary principles paper, which he said he had drafted with the assistance of BP. The MFA's goal is to sign the agreement at the Istanbul Summit in late June. As an intermediate step, the GOT plans to meet with major oil companies in April to discuss the best way to approach the Russians. Prior to that meeting, the Ministry would welcome the USG's initial reaction to the idea as well as any specific comments suggestions on the draft paper and/or on how best to approach the Russians. End Summary

[13.](#) (C) MFA Director General for Energy Hakki Akil called in EconCouns March 12 to follow up on his earlier discussion (reftel) about a GOT initiative to reduce, voluntarily, the flow of oil through the Turkish straits. Akil said the initiative reflected growing Turkish concern about the environmental, safety, and health risks associated with the rising volume of oil being transported through the straits. The amount had increased from 60 million tons in 1996 to 134.6 million tons in 2003. In the MFA's view, an accident involving one of the tankers is all but inevitable, and the result would be disastrous both for Istanbul and for energy markets.

[14.](#) (C) Akil argued that the major oil companies realize that pushing ever-increasing numbers of oil tankers through the straits is not a viable option, and that the solution lies in greater use of routes that bypass the straits. However, the companies are reluctant to invest in alternative routes -- adding to their costs -- for fear that they would in effect subsidize competitors by alleviating tanker traffic in the straits (i.e., the "free rider" problem).

[15.](#) (C) To get around this problem, the MFA wants to bring relevant parties together around a set of "voluntary principles" for using bypass routes. Akil stressed that this initiative is not designed to impose any restrictions on transit through the straits, nor is it meant to press for a specific bypass route. Rather, it is meant to lay the groundwork for commercial decisions by the oil companies.

[16.](#) (C) Akil provided us with a copy of a draft set of voluntary principles (which we are faxing to EB/CBED), which he drafted with the assistance of BP. The draft lays out the problems associated with increased use of the straits, and commits the companies to:

-- work together to quantify the cost of incremental shipping delays to oil producers and to refiners who are forced to buy alternative crude oil as a result of such delays and lost production;

-- give priority to maximizing the use of existing bypass routes;

-- facilitate and support the development of new bypass routes;

-- use all available capacity in bypass routes prior to shipping crude through the straits.

17. (C) Akil said he had discussed this initiative with BP, Chevron-Texaco, Shell, and others, who ranged from enthusiastic to mildly supportive. He has not yet raised this with Russian companies or with other governments (though he plans to raise with the UK shortly). The MFA plans to chair a meeting of the major oil companies in April to talk about next steps, specifically how best to approach and win the support of the Russian oil companies. Prior to that meeting, he would welcome any initial USG comments or suggestions on the proposal as well as on the specifics of the draft text. Akil added that the Ministry's goal is to organize the signing of the voluntary principles at the end-June NATO Summit in Istanbul.

18. (C) Comment and action request: The MFA is right that there is a need to find alternatives to ever-increasing flows of oil tankers via the straits, so we believe this initiative warrants serious attention and review. Embassy would appreciate Washington's initial reaction to the idea, as well as any specific comments or suggestions we could pass to the Foreign Ministry.

EDELMAN